

LA Opera
**EL ÚLTIMO
SUEÑO DE
FRIDA Y DIEGO**

AN EXPERIENCE L.A. EVENT

Thursday, November 30, 2023
Dorothy Chandler Pavilion
Downtown Los Angeles

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

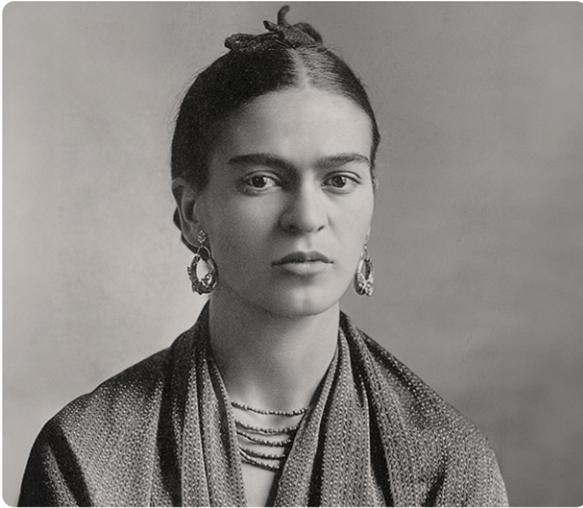
- *El Último Sueño de Frida y Diego* is an opera composed by Gabriela Lena Frank, with libretto by Nilo Cruz. Lina González-Granados conducts.
- The opera is sung in Spanish, with English and Spanish subtitles.
- If this is your first time attending an opera, visit LA Opera's guide, "[Opera Experience 101](#)."

FRIDA KAHLO

Frida Kahlo was born in Coyoacán, Mexico, in 1907, and died there in 1954. Today, she is one of the most popular and iconic painters of the 20th century, known for her striking self-portraits as well as her vibrant clothing and floral headdresses.

Kahlo was left with a limp after a polio infection as a child, and then was seriously injured in a bus accident in 1925; these injuries would require numerous medical procedures throughout her life and resulted in chronic pain. Kahlo began teaching herself to paint while recovering from the bus accident.





Frida Kahlo, 1932

“I paint myself because I am often alone and I am the subject I know best.”
—Frida Kahlo



Diego Rivera with a xoloitzcuintle dog in the Blue House, Coyoacán, 1957

“An artist is above all a human being, profoundly human to the core. If the artist can’t feel everything that humanity feels, if the artist isn’t capable of loving until he forgets himself and sacrifices himself if necessary, if he won’t put down his magic brush and head the fight against the oppressor, then he isn’t a great artist.”
—Diego Rivera

Kahlo’s art is sometimes described as surrealist or magical realist, though she resisted the surrealism label, saying, “I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality.” Kahlo’s art also was influenced by Mexican folk art. Her paintings deal with multiple aspects of identity, including disability, gender and sexuality, and the two sides of her ancestry: Kahlo’s father was German and of Hungarian descent, and her mother was Mexican, of Spanish and Indigenous descent.

Kahlo was less famous as an artist during her lifetime than Diego Rivera was, but has become one of the most popular, most reproduced, and most iconic painters of the 20th century. From the 1970s to now, Kahlo’s art and legacy have been embraced and amplified especially by feminist, LGBTQ+, and disabled communities and art historians.

DIEGO RIVERA

Diego Rivera was born in Guanajuato, Mexico, in 1886 and died in Mexico City in 1957. Famous for his large-scale murals, Rivera was considered by many the greatest Mexican painter of the 20th century. He was a central figure in the Mexican Muralism movement and an international celebrity during his lifetime.

Rivera is credited with re-introducing fresco painting to modern art and architecture. (Frescoes are murals done on fresh plaster; the fresco technique, closely associated with Italian Renaissance painting, has been employed since antiquity.) Rivera’s monumental murals depict Indigenous culture, working-class history, and utopian visions of a socialist future. Some of Rivera’s most famous murals were painted at the National School of Agriculture, Cortés Palace, and the National Palace in Mexico, as well as in the United States at the California School of Fine Arts, the American Stock Exchange Luncheon Club, and the Detroit Institute of the Arts. A 1933 Rivera mural at Rockefeller Center in New York was destroyed in 1934 because of its central depiction of communist Vladimir Lenin.

In addition to his art, Rivera is also known for his radical leftist politics and his tumultuous relationship with Frida Kahlo.

FRIDA KAHLO AND DIEGO RIVERA

Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera were married from 1929 to 1939, and again from 1940 to 1954. In the early years of their marriage, Rivera was a famous painter and Kahlo was known mostly as his wife, though today Frida Kahlo is more of a household name than Diego Rivera. Kahlo and Rivera were both politically active leftists and members of the Mexican Communist Party. Their home in Mexico City—rather, two homes connected by a bridge—was also where they made art and was a gathering place for activists and artists including Leon Trotsky and André Breton. Their marriage was famously tumultuous, and both Kahlo and Rivera had love affairs with other people while they were married.



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Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, The Music Center, Los Angeles

LA OPERA

LA Opera is the fourth-largest opera company in the United States. It was founded in 1986 and directed from 2003 to 2019 by Plácido Domingo. James Conlon has been music director since 2006. The company performs operas in the standard repertory as well as new and rarely staged operas.

DOROTHY CHANDLER PAVILION

The Dorothy Chandler Pavilion is the oldest and largest of the four venues at the Los Angeles Music Center, which also includes the Ahmanson Theatre, the Mark Taper Forum, and Walt Disney Concert Hall. Today, the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion is home to LA Opera and Glogrya Kaufman Presents Dance at the Music Center. It was the longtime home of the LA Phil and also the venue of most Academy Awards ceremonies from 1969 to 1999.

The Dorothy Chandler Pavilion was designed by Welton Becket & Associates, who also designed the Beverly Hilton and the Capitol Records Building, among many other sites. Constructed from 1962 to 1964, the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion exemplifies Becket & Associates' "total design" philosophy: every detail, from the engineering to fixtures to typography, was considered together as part of the overall design. The lobby is covered in Mexican onyx, with crystal sconces and columns faced with hand-cut Byzantine-style mosaic tile from Venice, Italy. There are more than one million mosaic tiles throughout the Pavilion. The dome in the lobby is 24-karat gold-leaf. The 17-foot-high, 10-foot-diameter chandeliers together have 27,500 pieces of crystal, most of it hand-cut in Bavaria.

Dorothy Buffum Chandler (1901–1997) was a Los Angeles cultural leader and fundraiser focused on the performing arts. Her father was a mayor of Long Beach and co-owner of the department-store chain Buffums, and her husband was the publisher of the *L.A. Times* from 1945 to 1960.



Photo: Karli Cadel

LA Opera: *El Último Sueño de Frida y Diego* (*The Last Dream of Frida and Diego*), November 18–December 9, 2023, at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion



Dorothy Chandler Pavilion Auditorium

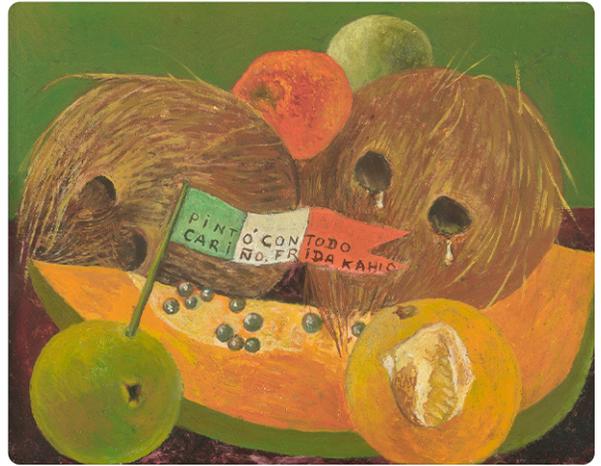
Photo: Andreas Praefcke

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- ⦿ Is *El Último Sueño de Frida y Diego* a tragedy? Why or why not?
- ⦿ How did the stagecraft (set design, costumes, lighting) represent or reflect Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera's respective art and aesthetics?
- ⦿ How do you understand the character of Leonardo? What does this character add to the narrative or meaning of the opera?
- ⦿ How are the differences in Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera's art, ideas, and identities represented in the narrative?
- ⦿ The *Wall Street Journal* review said, "Opera is an ideal medium for fusing magic and reality." Do you agree? Why or why not? How are magic and reality fused in this production, and how does opera uniquely enable that?

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- ⦿ More productions by LA Opera
laopera.org
- ⦿ *Weeping Coconuts* by Frida Kahlo, at LACMA
collections.lacma.org/node/193893
- ⦿ *Flower Day* by Diego Rivera, at LACMA
collections.lacma.org/node/228444
- ⦿ *América Tropical*, a mural by Rivera contemporary David Alfaro Siqueiros
626 North Main Street Los Angeles, 90012
theamericatropical.org
- ⦿ The Museum of Latin American Art in Long Beach
molaa.org
- ⦿ USC Thornton Opera
uscopera.com
- ⦿ Upcoming Visions and Voices Events
1/21/24 [Dudamel Leads *Das Rheingold*](#)
1/27/24 [The Met in HD: *Carmen*](#)
2/25/24 [Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street](#)
3/23/24 [The Met in HD: *Roméo et Juliette*](#)
4/17/24 [Fat Ham](#)



Frida Kahlo, *Weeping Coconuts*, oil on board, 1951



Diego Rivera, *Flower Day*, oil on canvas, 1925



David Alfaro Siqueiros, *América Tropical*, mural, 1930s

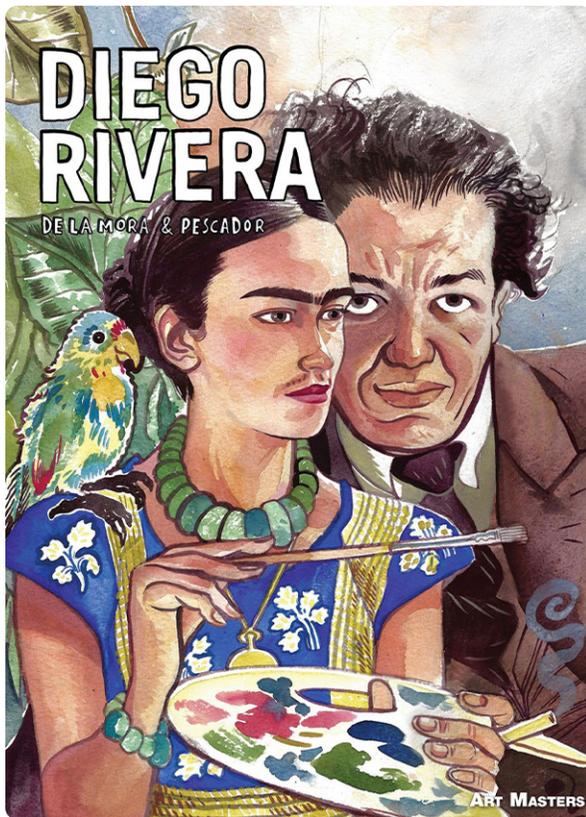
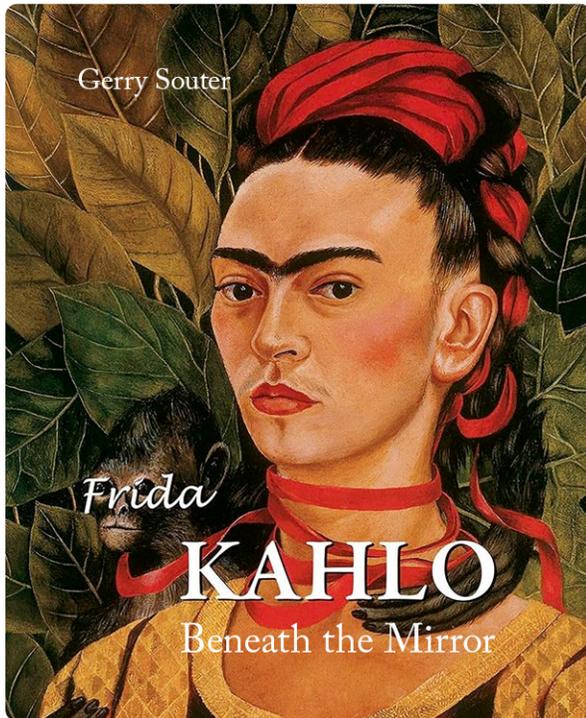
Photo: Gil Ortiz



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ARTICLES

- ⦿ Athena Androutsopoulou et al., "[Beloved Monster: A Narrative Inquiry into Autobiographical Writings of Frida Kahlo](#)," *Narrative Inquiry* 32, no. 2 (2022): 270–288.
- ⦿ Brittney Romagna, "[The Art of Resilience: A Psychobiography of Frida Kahlo](#)," *International Review of Psychiatry* (2023): 1–13.

BOOKS

- ⦿ Gerry Souter, [Frida Kahlo: Beneath the Mirror](#) (Bournemouth: Parkstone Press, 2016).
- ⦿ María Hesse and Achy Obejas, [Frida Kahlo: An Illustrated Life](#) (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 2018).
- ⦿ Francisco de la Mora, [Diego Rivera](#) (London: SelfMadeHero, 2021).
- ⦿ Carol Sabbeth, [Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera: Their Lives and Ideas, 24 Activities](#) (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2005).
- ⦿ Stephanie J. Smith, [The Power and Politics of Art in Postrevolutionary Mexico](#) (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2017).

DATABASES

- ⦿ [ARTstor](#)
- ⦿ [Documents of 20th-century Latin American and Latino Art](#)
- ⦿ [EBSCOhost Art & Architecture Source](#)

STREAMING VIDEO

- ⦿ [Great Women Artists: Frida Kahlo](#) (BayView Entertainment, 2006).
- ⦿ [Artists & Love: Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera](#) (Icarus Films, 2020).